



# Buzzwords ...

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..... the newsletter for National Beekeepers' Association members

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**Buzzwords No 26 December 1990**

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- \* **Pesticides contaminate honey**
- \* **African bees reach USA**
- \* **Honey sellers unite?**



## PRESIDENT'S NOTES

As 1990 draws to a close I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a good honey crop. From those to whom I have spoken over a large part of New Zealand, it seems that prospects are very encouraging. May I make mention again to you, when you are extracting take particular care to keep different nectar sources separate as this adds value to your honey. Mixed sources honey rates very low in terms of price on the world market.

Heather and I wish you and your families a peaceful Christmas, safe travelling with a joyous and fruitful New Year 1991.

Dudley Ward  
NBA President

## TAURANGA CONSULTANT TO HEAD INTERNATIONAL AGENCY

A beekeeping specialist from Tauranga has been appointed to run an international scientific trust based in Great Britain.

Andrew Matheson, at present apicultural consultant with MAF (the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries) in Tauranga, is the new director of the International Bee Research Association (IBRA). This organisation provides a comprehensive information service on all aspects of beekeeping, both practical and scientific.

"IBRA offers advice to all concerned with apiculture in its widest range," said Andrew "to beekeepers, agriculturalists, government departments, rural development personnel, botanists and foresters."

"At its headquarters in Cardiff, IBRA has a permanent staff experienced in science, information and advisory services, and publishing. They're supported by a network of regional representatives in some 50 countries, and by experienced scientists who make up the association's government council."

IBRA publishes three scientific journals as well as texts, visual aids, bibliographies and multilingual dictionaries. The association organises conferences and seminars and operates a library service. Its central library is probably the biggest apiculture library in the world, with over 50,000 items, and is supported by branch libraries in four continents.

Andrew Matheson has been an apicultural consultant with MAF for 13 years, working in Hamilton, Nelson and Tauranga. For the past two years he has been editing this newsletter, *Buzzwords*, on contract to the NBA. He is best known in the beekeeping industry for his work in publications, beekeeper training and international consultancies.

"The job will be a very demanding one", according to Andrew, "involving expertise in management, organization, editing, writing, representing IBRA and negotiating funding for its activities.

"The selection of a MAF consultant from New Zealand reflects this country's high reputation in world apicultural and scientific circles, and recognizes the quality of training that MAF provides for its staff."

MAF's business manager responsible for apiculture services in MAF North region, Hans Verberne, said from Hamilton that MAF would be moving soon to fill the vacancy left by Andrew Matheson's departure.

Footnote: There is currently a freeze on new appointments, as a result of the National government's "razor gang". It is hoped that this position will still be filled after the current delay.

*MAF apiculture services*

## BRANCH NOTES

Christchurch has an active hobbyist beekeepers club which organises field days, meetings and a newsletter. There's a field day on 12 January, and one combined with the North Canterbury club in March. Members can also hire the club's honey extractors. Contact the president, Hank Muskee, on (03) 894 427.

Want some ideas for your branch? Well, **Hawkes Bay** have been busy lately. They've had a display at the local A & P show, a diseasesathon (or "inspection bee"), and an exercise hiving feral colonies. They have evening meetings with quick-fire raffles and a superb newsletter every two months. Their next big event is a field day in mid February at John and Jenny Dobson's Bee Farm at Kereru. Details to be advised - Saturday 16 February is the likely day. How about neighbouring branches organising a visit combined with a honey house crawl?

**Bay of Plenty** are ending the year with a social on Saturday 22 December. This is also an opportunity to farewell

Andrew Matheson, who's moving to take up a job overseas. The social will be a pot luck barbeque (BYO food and drink) at Dave and Prue Debrecey's house in Moffat Road, Bethlehem, starting at 6 pm. The mead competition judge is thirsty, so bring plenty of entries. There will also be a meat raffle, so bring some of those pollination fees. At the Bay's winter social a certain member delighted all with his Santa Claus act. What out-of-season treat can Roy come as this time - Easter bunny? Kiwifruit harvest queen? The mind boggles. Come along and find out.

Wasps in **Marlborough** had better watch out on 17 February - that's the local NBA branch's wasp eradication day at White's Bay. This is a good PR exercise for the industry.

## CONTAMINATED HONEY

It had to happen, sooner or later, and honey contaminated with fluvalinate has been found sooner than expected in the USA.

The USA Food and Drug Administration will test honey from at least six states, after contaminated honey was found in Massachusetts with 23 times the legal limit of fluvalinate.

Fluvalinate is used to control Varroa mites, and is registered for use as Apistan - controlled-release plastic strips impregnated with the chemical.

Used correctly, this chemical shouldn't cause contamination of honey, but in the real world chemicals aren't always used as directed. Two pollination beekeepers were found to be using fluvalinate incorrectly. One had Apistan strips in hives while a honey super was on. The other beekeeper, who had the high residue levels, had soaked rags in fluvalinate to use in the hives.

The possible addition of a new product to the shop shelves - honey plus pesticide - raises concern about the use and misuse of drugs in hives. No matter how well the application methods are defined, there will always be cowboy operators trying to take shortcuts. Liquid fluvalinate is readily available as Mavrik, an orchard insecticide.

## BEEKEEPER OF THE YEAR

New Zealand may soon have a beekeeper of the year competition, thanks to efforts by the Bay of Plenty branch and executive of the NBA.

As a result of the remit from this year's conference, the BOP branch came away with a proposal to the executive. A small committee led by Trevor Bryant has developed a detailed system for such a competition - including ideas for rules, judging and sponsorship.

The NBA executive is currently considering the proposal

Will the beekeeper of the year be a kiwifruit grower? Well, this year's kiwifruit grower of the year is a beekeeper. Doug Hall from South Auckland has 55 hives and is a member of your association.

Rohan Ameratunga is a clinical immunologist at Auckland's medical school. He's seeking blood samples from beekeepers to find out more about allergies to bee and wasp stings.

Most normal individuals stung by bees tend to develop localised reactions around the sting site which consist of pain, redness and swelling. Apart from the discomfort most individuals tolerate stings reasonably well.

There are, however, some individuals who for unknown reasons develop antibodies of the IgE class (allergic antibodies) to components of venom. These are the same antibodies which cause symptoms of hay fever and many types of asthma. When these people are stung by bees they may experience potentially life-threatening reactions. These reactions are mediated by the IgE antibodies.

Individuals who are truly allergic to bee stings may have the following symptoms; faintness, hives (on the skin, not in the back yard!), difficulty with breathing, wheezing, and occasionally loss of consciousness. In the last decade pure venom preparations have become readily available to the medical profession. These preparations can be used in gradually increasing doses to "desensitize" allergic individuals.

When individuals are exposed to venom on a regular basis high levels of "blocking antibody" develop. Blocking antibodies belong to the IgG class. In patients allergic to bee stings who are treated with bee venom, blocking antibodies also develop. In these patients it is thought that these blocking antibodies prevent the action of the IgE (allergic) antibodies. Measurement of blocking antibodies is thus a very useful test which is of considerable reassurance value to allergic individuals, and to parents in the case of allergic children.

The researcher in this project is seeking the help of NBA members with this work, and has obtained ethics approval for measuring antibody levels in volunteer beekeepers.

He's had help from some Auckland beekeepers, but needs volunteers nationwide. The blood will be taken off locally and transported to Auckland.

If you want to take part, write to Dr Rohan Ameratunga, Auckland Medical School, Park Road, Auckland. For further information phone him at (09) 795 780 ext 6388.

## MORE ON ALLERGIES

A Hawkes Bay orchardist died after receiving a single bee sting while visiting his beekeeper to discuss pollination arrangements.

The orchardist was known to be allergic, but wasn't carrying his medication at the time of the sting. His condition deteriorated rapidly before medical help arrived.

This news is a sobering reminder not to treat venom allergies lightly. People known to be genuinely allergic to bee stings should carry their medication at all times.

Commercial beekeepers should carry a kit to deal with emergencies.

Anakit is one of the best available. It contains a loaded syringe of adrenalin which is used to inject straight into a muscle, as well as antihistamines. You can get an Anakit on prescription from your GP, or simply a preloaded adrenalin syringe. You should get advice on how to use them first.

*MAF apiculture unit*

## THEY'VE ARRIVED

Africanized honey bees have hit the States. The first swarm found to have moved overland from Mexico was picked up in the Rio Grande River Valley in Texas, on 15 October.

USDA officials have confirmed that the bees are Africanized, and are now conducting intensive survey and trapping programmes to see if other AHB are present.

In the best tradition of user pays, Texas has to come up with money to help delay the invasion of AHB, otherwise the state or at least part of it will be quarantined. Movement of untested bees out of the quarantine zone will be forbidden, but with the AHB moving 400-550 km per year under its own steam, this may only delay the inevitable.

*USDA and MAF*



## HAVE A DRINK AND SAVE THE TREES

Here's a novel (and enjoyable) way of saving our precious nectar sources - knock back a few bottles of wine. You might have seen in the shops a range of wines with stunning paintings of New Zealand flowers on the labels - the Forest Flowers Collection. These are all varietal wines selling for less than \$10 per bottle.

For each bottle sold the company behind the range, Villa Maria Estate, is donating money to the Save the Pohutukawa Fund. They're not saying how much per bottle, but so far have given over \$13,000 to the fund.

The pohutukawa is an incredible tree - it brightens up our Decembers, makes much of our northern coastline very attractive, and is an amazing nectar source. During a flow you can shake copious quantities of nectar out of the open flowers.

Pohutukawa are also dying fast, and the reasons for the disappearance are not fully understood. The money raised is helping the Department of Conservation to save the tree.

So raise your glasses to this distinctive New Zealand tree!



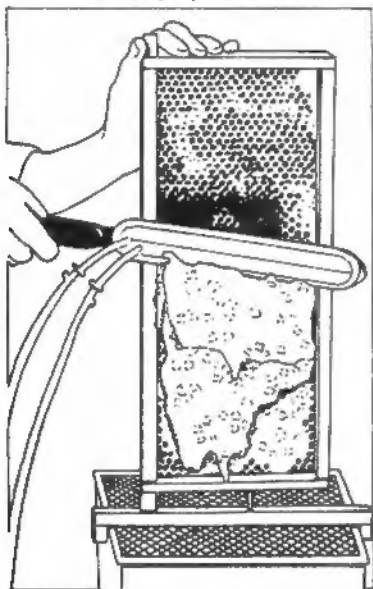
## DEVELOPMENTS AT TELFORD

There's a new polytechnic in South Otago - Telford Rural Polytechnic. The former farm training institute has been granted full polytechnic status within the education system.

Don't forget they run beekeeping courses. The two-year Certificate in Apiculture is the one originally developed at the Bay of Plenty Polytechnic, and is available to people all over New Zealand (and elsewhere) by correspondence.

The other course is the one-year residential course. Students work in the 800-hive commercial apiary, and also gain skills in carpentry, engineering, mechanics, fencing and horticulture.

For more information contact Gavin McKenzie or Dave Lockhart at Telford Rural Polytechnic, Private Bag, Balclutha, Phone (03) 418 1550, fax (03) 418 3584.



## KASHMIR BEE VIRUS AGAIN

In November's issue of *Buzzwords* we mentioned that people objecting to New Zealand queens entering the USA had raised Kashmir Bee Virus as a problem.

Here's what one North American expert says about this virus. Dr Gard Otis is president of CAPA (Canadian Association of Professional Apiculturalists), and in their August 1990 newsletter he wrote:

"The issue of Kashmir Bee Virus (KBV) has been raised recently. I have just talked at length with Denis Anderson, CSIRO, Canberra, Australia.

"It is a very common virus: he has detected it in nearly every bee he has examined from Australia and New Zealand. It exists normally as an unapparent but low infection of the guts of adult bees. Other bees, in cleaning combs, contract the virus, and only small concentrations (eg. 10 particles) can cause their infection. "When KBV was detected in New Zealand in 1986, they checked some Canadian (Albertan) bees. Denis detected KBV, a different strain again, in the first bees he examined. The virus is probably found throughout Canada.

"In Australia, Denis rates it as perhaps the least important of the viruses. However, if the virus gets into the haemolymph of the bees, it multiplies very rapidly and kills the bee. There is some extensive concern that mites may inject the virus during their feeding."

## USER PAYS IN CALIFORNIA

California beekeepers have lost state government funding for beekeeping regulatory and research work, because they didn't come up with their share of the funding.

The government apiary programme will be wound down over the next few months, and their Apiaries Act may be repealed because there will be no programme to service it.

Dr Eric Mussen, a beekeeping extension officer at the University of California, said, "The state is in very poor financial health and all programs that are considered to be only for specific user groups (like beekeepers) will have to be funded totally by them. We will never get a matching funds commitment again."

Things went awry for beekeepers when politicians noticed that their \$210,000 had only been matched by \$90,000 from the industry. They felt that California beekeepers didn't have their act together, so refused them an extension of time to collect levies from beekeepers - a mere 15c per hive.

The money was to have been spent on contracts for bee disease control work, research and general beekeeping extension. Now all this will close down.

"For those with an anti-Big Brother attitude, this might seem like the perfect solution: anarchy," said Dr Mussen. "But a quick examination of the content of the Apiary Protection Act shows that it is a large list of enabling legislation."

If eliminated it would also eliminate a lot of protections for beekeepers, especially apiary inspection by the state, restrictions on the entry of bees, AFB control, health certificates for bees leaving the state, pesticide controls, the outlawing of fixed-comb hives, I D numbers for out-apiaries and the role of state inspectors in certifying bee strength.

Dr Mussen concludes that "this is an extremely interesting situation into which the beekeepers have got themselves. The onus is on the 1991 officers, board members, and the legislative committee of the Beekeepers' Association to resolve the issue before the Apiary Program is dissolved, otherwise operating bees is going to be extremely difficult."

*Adapted from the University of California apiaries newsletter*

## BARE YOUR ARMS

Beekeepers can help people allergic to bee stings by giving blood samples to an Auckland University research project.

## RELEASE OF GORSE MOTH

MAF's Chief Veterinary Officer has approved the release from quarantine of the moth *Cydia succedana*, a biological control agent of gorse. *C. succedana* was imported into New Zealand in August 1989 by DSIR Plant Protection and held under strict quarantine conditions at DSIR Lincoln, so that host specificity studies and disease risk analysis could be undertaken.

On the basis of the results of this testing a report was prepared by Richard Hill of DSIR Plant Protection on the suitability of *C. succedana* as a biological control agent of gorse. This was sent to MAF with a request for approval for release.

Before approval was granted the report was sent to a number of government departments, universities and representative organisations for their comments. The initial replies from these groups detailed a number of concerns, however, the majority of those were resolved after further correspondence between MAF, the concerned groups and DSIR Plant Protection.

The organisations who still expressed concerns over the proposal were given seven working days notice of the intended release. They were not forthcoming with objections and so approval for release of *C. succedana* on 10 October 1990 was granted.

MAF National Agriculture Security Service

## STEPS TO REMOVE GINGER

Do yourself a favour - save some nectar sources. Native bush is under threat from wild ginger - more serious than most weeds because it's shade tolerant.

Save some nectar sources in your area by eradicating any ginger plants you see. Birds spread the seeds over long distances, so even plants in gardens are a threat.

The fight is on to remove the ginger plant from our native bush and to warn home gardeners of its danger. The innocent looking plant has been promoted as an attractive wildflower for decades and has even appeared on a New Zealand stamp. But despite this glowing reputation, ginger is considered to be a major menace because of its ability to root deeply into the ground and compete with native and other introduced seedlings. Once established in the bush fringes it quickly spreads. Seeds from its bright yellow flowers are readily spread by birds.

To remove the plant manually is a laborious and back-breaking job and even the most diligent attempt may not stop regrowth. Escort is recommended as the most effective killer of ginger. Noxious plants officers are suggesting this product, as are members of the Forest and Bird organisation.

The plants are best sprayed during spring through until late autumn when they are actively growing. The results will be noticed after about a year, the large tubers are left dry and mulched in the ground.

## BEEKEEPING IN CANADA

A concise picture of the Canadian beekeeping industry is in the Canadian Honey Council's research brief - dated 1989 but released earlier this year.

Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba are the prairie provinces which account for about 75% of the total honey production in Canada. The Canadian beekeeping industry expanded through the 1970s and early 1980s, peaking in the mid '80s with about 700,000 colonies.

These colonies averaged yields of 53 kg each. The highest provincial average yield was 104 kg in Saskatchewan (1988) and the lowest in Quebec (20 kg in 1988).

In 1988, there were an estimated 606 000 colonies, showing a downward trend in the industry. The estimated value of the beekeeping industry based on beeswax and honey sales at the producer level has also levelled off.

Canada exported 15 600 tonnes to the US in 1983 (83% of their total exports) but only 6 000 tonnes (55% of total exports) in 1987. They imported 317 000 packages of bees in 1984, but only 14 000 in 1988 and all of these were from Australia and New Zealand. On the other hand, their imports of honey from the US increased from 102 tonnes in 1984 to 287 tonnes in 1987.

Research priorities for Canada include

- \* Finding an integrated pest management (IPM) solution for dealing with the tracheal mite, instead of eradicating it.
- \* Developing new methods of producing queens, packages and nucs to reduce reliance of imported queens and packages from New Zealand and Australia.
- \* Improving overwintering and honey production management.
- \* Stock improvement
- \* Reducing pesticide loss, through increased use of IPM technique
- \* Floral resources and the value of pollination.
- \* Honey market research, especially diversification of products and packages.

## AND MORE PROBLEMS

Varroa has been found in Canada at three places along the New Brunswick-Maine (USA) border. All hives in the infected apiaries were eradicated. Tracheal mite is a lot more widespread. Some hundreds of colonies have been destroyed, and every hive in the quarantine areas will be surveyed in autumn 1991.

At least it's too cold in Canada for Africanized honey bees to survive, even if they do arrive on ships (as they have done already). Canada is becoming increasingly self-sufficient in bees, after the US border was closed because of Varroa's presence in the US.

## TOUR THE SOVIET UNION

Beekeepers in New Zealand can join a tour to the Soviet Union, one of the most rapidly-changing countries in the world at present.

A US firm is organising a Russian beekeeping tour for 21 July-3 August 1991. The price for the tour alone is \$US2525 (share twin) - which includes all travel and accommodation in Helsinki (where the tour starts and finishes) and on visits to Tallinn, Moscow, Ryazan and Leningrad. Travel to and from Helsinki (Finland) is extra.

For further information contact Harold Liberman, Global Nature Tours, 2701 Oxford Circle, Upper Marlboro, MD 20772 USA (301) 627-4777 (evenings and weekends).

## ORGANIZING HONEY SELLERS

International honey prices have been held artificially low for several years by a few key buyers. Dan Hall of the North American Honey Producers thinks he has the answer.

Demand for the world's honey production has grown, yet prices continue at or below production costs. Honey producers around the world are crying out for improved prices.

Major honey producers in North America have contacted Dan Hall for help. They say that with demand up (thanks to honey promotion and sharply higher use as a good food manufacturing ingredient) buyers have not responded with adequate price offers.



Honey sellers around the world have allowed themselves to be played off, one against another. Sellers in one country hear that a German (or other buyer) has purchased honey at prices well below true supply and demand price levels. Many sellers have said that one load of underpriced honey can set in motion disastrous pricing for the balance of a marketing season. The point is this: honey sellers are not organized, so our buyers take advantage of this condition. (Some critics even claim that buyers purposely spread false market information merely to drive down market prices).

What then is the answer to the world honey marketing problem? The answer may be simple if we are willing to respond. Form an international honey sellers/producers cartel.

A marketing cartel is a voluntary combination of independent private enterprises supplying like commodities that agree to limit their competitive activities by allocating customers or markets, regulating quality or quality of output, pooling returns or profits, fixing prices or terms of sale, or by other methods of controlling production, price, or distribution. While forming such a cartel would be illegal within a country, such activities can legally be, and are, engaged upon in international combinations among sellers.

While the concept of a cartel may be distasteful to some of you, the continued low pricing situation demands strong seller action.

Dan Hall wants to gauge international interest in forming such a cartel. Responses are being collected by a firm of accountants and will be confidential. If there is enough interest, a meeting will be held in the first quarter of 1991 in either Miami or Mexico City.

Reply to:

Anderson, Rasmussen & Derr, Chartered Accountants  
700 Florida Avenue  
Suite T - 203  
Longmont  
Colorado 80501  
United States of America  
Facsimile (001) 303-776-8879

State whether you are interested in forming a cartel and becoming a member, and give preferred month and venue for the meeting. Include name, postal address, telephone and facsimile numbers.

### BUZZWORDS IS ...

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